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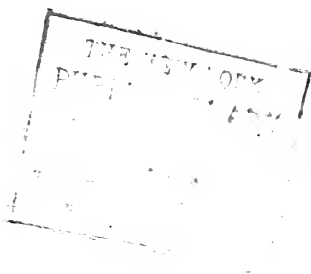












Only in Fun.—Frontispiece.



"You had better see and get that big spider off your dress."

p. 20.

ONLY IN FUN;

OR,

HENRY WILLSON'S VOYAGE.

BY

LUCY ELLEN GUERNSEY,

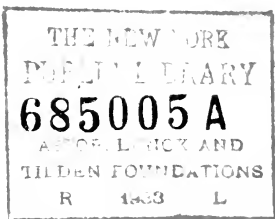
AUTHOR OF "IRISH AMY," "COMFORT ALLISON," "THE TATTLER,"
"NELLY, OR THE BEST INHERITANCE," "TWIN ROSES."

"As a madman that casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, so is he
that deceiveth his neighbour and saith, 'Am I not in sport?'"

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ONLY IN FUN.

CHAPTER I.

DON'T, HARRY! Let me count my stitches, please;" and Emily Willson made another attempt to reckon the stitches on the beautiful jacket she was making. She had only got as far as the middle when Harry again jogged her arm, saying, "Look, Em! There goes Mr. Parsons!"

Emily lost patience a little. She was in a hurry, for she had promised to finish this particular piece of work by a certain day, and this was the third or fourth time Henry had interrupted her counting. In-

deed, he had been doing everything in his power to hinder his sister by tangling her work, hiding her needle if she laid it down a moment, and interrupting her counting by asking questions and making remarks to distract her attention.

"Please don't, Harry!" she said again. "If I don't send this to Mrs. Kendall to-morrow, I don't know when I shall have another chance, and I promised it this week. It really is necessary for me to finish it to-night."

"Finish away! Who hinders you?" said Harry, laughing. "I am sure I don't!" But at the same time seeing her needle, which she had laid on the table for a moment, he slyly picked it up and slipped it into his pocket. In a minute Emily turned to take up her needle.

“Now my needle is gone!” said she. “Did you see it, Harry?”

“Here is a needle. Is this it?” asked Harry, taking up an embroidery needle which lay on the table.

“You know it isn’t! Harry dear, how can you like to make yourself so disagreeable?”

“What have I done now?” asked Harry, innocently. “I am sure I don’t know one needle from another!”

But here his amusement received a sudden and disagreeable interruption. Mr. Willson was sitting in the same room with his children, but quite at the other end, and was so busy with his papers that nobody supposed him to have eyes or ears for anything which was passing. Suddenly, however, he spoke:

“Harry, give your sister her

needle, and then go up stairs to bed. Do you hear me?"

"I am sure, sir, I was only in fun!" said Harry, in an injured tone, producing the needle, however. "It's rather hard if a fellow is to be sent to bed for a harmless joke."

"Do you call it a harmless joke to make your sister uncomfortable, as you have been doing for the last hour and more, besides hindering her from finishing the work she has promised to do? However, we will discuss that matter another time. At present, I want you to go to bed."

Harry knew that there was nothing for it but to obey, and he went off up stairs with a very crestfallen air. "I declare, it is a shame!" he said as he mounted the stairs. "To send a boy of my age to bed before

dark, and for nothing at all! It's real mean. Father makes such a fuss about every little thing! I wish I could have stayed at Uncle John's, only the boys plagued me so. If father is going to be like that all the time, there will not be very much fun to be had at home. I am sure of that!"

"I don't see what has come over Harry. He didn't use to be such a torment," said Emily.

"I saw a good deal of the same sort of thing going on among John's boys while I was there," observed her father. "I am very sorry I ever sent Harry among them. I think the bad habits he has acquired, and especially this love of teasing, more than a set-off to any book-learning he has gained. I fear I did wrong."

“You acted for the best, father,” said Emily, “and there is no use in ‘going back on it,’ as Cousin Hester says. You could not know how it would turn out. Besides, I don’t think it has all been done at Uncle John’s. Harry was a good deal of a tease when he went away, though not as bad as he is now. You were away so often that you had not much time to observe him, and besides, I think mamma hid the children’s faults while she lived. She could not bear to have you annoyed during the little time you were at home. I am not sure it was the wisest way, but I am quite sure she acted for the best.”

“She always did act for the best!” said Mr. Willson, sighing deeply.

“I have been wondering whether I ought to say anything to you

about this habit of Harry's," continued Emily, working, while she talked, with a skill and speed which would seem wonderful to an unpracticed person. "I don't like to make complaints, and I don't so much mind my own annoyance, but Harry makes Cousin Hester a great deal of trouble, and he is spoiling Nelly's temper with teasing. The poor child does not understand a joke in the least, and besides, he draws her into serious scrapes. Only two or three days ago he persuaded her to go into the mud above the dam where they have been drawing off the water, to look, as he said, for pearl shells. Nelly stuck fast in the mud, and lost both her shoes, and made herself a shocking spectacle. I don't know how she would have got out only for Jeduthun Cooke,

who went in after her. He fished out her shoes, too, but they are quite spoiled. She can never wear them again."

"When was this?" asked Mr. Willson.

"The day you were over at Hobartstown."

"Why did you not tell me before?"

"Well, I have not seen my way quite clear," replied Emily. "I did not like to tell tales, and I thought you would soon come to understand matters for yourself; and I believe I am weak when Harry is concerned," continued Emily, working faster than ever. "When he turns and looks at me with mamma's eyes and smile, I cannot say a word. However, I do think it very necessary that Harry should be attended to. He plays his

pranks on everybody, old and young, and I am afraid some of them will bring him into serious trouble. Every one does not understand practical jokes, and few people like them."

"They are utterly intolerable and detestable!" exclaimed Mr. Willson. "No gentleman or lady will ever be guilty of one. And as for teasing—taking pleasure in giving pain, for that is what it amounts to—it is downright mean and wicked, whether the victim is man or beast."

Emily and Harry Willson were children of Mr. Willson, the minister at Boonville. Mr. Willson had only been settled at Boonville for about a year. He had been a missionary at the West, having charge of three churches from ten to fifteen

miles apart, besides a mission among the Indians. Naturally, he was very little with his family; and when he came home for a rest, utterly tired out and used up with work and riding over all sorts of roads in all sorts of weather, Mrs. Willson and Emily were careful to keep all annoyances out of his way and make everything as pleasant as possible. Mrs. Willson was Emily's stepmother, but there was only one will and purpose between them. Emily might have had a comfortable and luxurious home with her mother's sister in Boston, but she preferred to share her father's lot in Kansas. She always declared this was no sacrifice to her—that she liked her life in Kansas better than that in Boston—and I believe that she spoke the truth.

Mrs. Willson's health had always been reasonably good till her last children were born—a pair of delicate twin babies, which languished through six months of life, and then went home again. The brave little woman who had gone through so much drooped on a sudden like a broken plant. Her husband brought her to the famous doctor now at the Springs, but it was all in vain, and after a few months the mother followed her babies. After her death Mr. Willson had no heart to go back to the West, and being offered the charge of the little church at Boonville, he gladly accepted it, and once more gathered his children into a home.

Harry had been sent, about a year before his mother's death, to an uncle in Central New York, where

he had lived ever since till about three or four weeks before the time that our story begins. He was now a handsome, well-grown boy of fourteen, very attractive at first sight from his personal appearance and his pleasing manners. We shall make his farther acquaintance in the course of this story, so I will tell you no more about him. Emily loved him for his mother's sake, but little Nelly, who had begun by worshipping him, now began to wish he had never come home at all, and Cousin Hester, a distant relative of Mr. Willson's, who lived with him, declared that Harry would be the death of her.

CHAPTER II.

THE next morning Harry got up feeling a good deal ashamed of himself, and not a little out of humour. It was very mortifying to him to think that he, a great boy of fourteen—quite a man in his own estimation—should have been sent to bed like a baby, and, as he said to himself, all for nothing.

“Just as though a little joke like that was anything to be punished for. Ah! I wonder what father would say if he were to see Jack and Will? Emily needn’t have made such a fuss about nothing. If that is going to be the way, I

shall not have much comfort at home."

At breakfast Emily looked pale and tired, and in answer to her father's question, she confessed that she had sat up till one o'clock to finish her work.

"You must not do that," said Mr. Willson, decidedly. "Nothing that you can earn will be any compensation for the injury done to your eyesight and your general health by sitting up to work at night."

"I do not mean to work at night," replied Emily. "I know it is not good economy, but I had promised this special piece of work, and besides that, I never like to break a promise. Mrs. Kendall has been so kind that I feel specially bound not to disappoint her. I thought I had

allowed myself plenty of time to finish the jacket before bed-time last evening."

Harry understood that he had been the cause of his sister's headache, and for a few minutes he felt ashamed and sorry, and *almost* resolved that he would never tease anybody again. Pretty soon after breakfast, however, little Nelly was heard saying, at first in a pleading and then in a passionate tone,

"Please don't, Harry! I must learn my lesson, or I shall miss. Oh, Harry! Cousin Hester, Harry has got my book, and he won't let me have it."

"Harry, if you don't leave off plaguing that child I will tell your father," said Cousin Hetty, who was Nelly's special friend and protector. "See if I don't."

"You had better see and get that big black spider off your dress," returned Harry. "There he goes, running right up your back. My! what a big fellow! He looks just like the tarantulas we used to have in Kansas, that bite so. I should not wonder if he had come out of some of the things father unpacked yesterday."

Cousin Hester was brave enough in general, but she had a great horror of spiders. She turned pale, and set down the dish of butter she was carrying to shake off the imaginary tarantula. Unluckily, in her haste she placed it too near the edge of the table, and touching it with her dress, it fell on the earthen floor of the shed where they were standing, and broke all to pieces. Harry burst out laughing, and ran

off to school without waiting to see the end of the adventure.

"I don't believe there *is* any spider on your dress," said Nelly, after looking carefully for the insect. "It is just one of Harry's tricks."

"He is certainly the most aggravating boy I ever saw in my life!" exclaimed Cousin Hester, "always in mischief, from morning till night. I really wish that your father had left him where he was. There has been no peace or comfort since he came home. Now, I shall feel all day as if I were being crawled over by spiders and what-do-you-call-'ems; and there is the dish broken besides, and ever so much butter wasted."

"What is the matter?" asked Mr. Willson, coming into the shed

at that moment. "Where is Harry? I want him."

"He has gone off to school, and a good riddance to him," replied Cousin Hester, who was thoroughly vexed. "I am sure I wish he would stay there. I never saw such a boy."

"What has he done now?" asked Mr. Willson. Cousin Hester proceeded to tell the story in spite of Nelly's imploring looks, for little Nelly loved her brother a great deal more than he deserved, and often took blame which she did not merit to shield Harry.

"I will take the matter in hand," said Mr. Willson. "Nelly, have you learned your spelling-lesson perfectly?"

"No, papa, because—"

"Because Harry took her book

and hid it," said Cousin Hester, as Nelly hesitated. "The poor child was studying away as hard as she could, and he came and snatched her book away. I do think she ought to have an excuse, because really she is not to blame this time."

"Very well, I will write one for her. Where is your book now, Nelly?"

"I don't know, papa. Harry put it somewhere."

Mr. Willson sighed deeply and walked into the house. He did not know what to do. He had never taken a very active part in the management of his children, and he had hardly ever punished any of them. All the burden of government had fallen on his wife's shoulders, and since her death Em-

ily had taken the care of little Nelly. He saw, however, very clearly, that something must be done with Harry, not only for his own sake, but for that of the household in general, for, as Cousin Hester truly said, there was no peace for anybody.

Harry came home at noon in high good spirits, and was just about to sit down to dinner when his father said :

“Harry, where is Nelly’s spelling-book?”

“I don’t know, father.”

“You took it from her this morning. What did you do with it?”

“It is somewhere about the kitchen, I suppose,” replied Harry.

“I will find it after dinner.”

“You will find it now, if you please,” said his father, quietly.

“Now, this moment, I mean, before you eat dinner.”

Sulkily enough Harry obeyed. He had quite a hunt for the book, for he had entirely forgotten where he had hidden it, and dinner was nearly over when he came back and sat down.

“Please give me some butter, Emily,” said he, helping himself to an ear of green corn.

“No, Emily,” interrupted his father. “Harry’s share of the butter went to enrich the floor of the shed this morning. He can use it in that way, of course, if he prefers it so, but he cannot have it to eat at the table at the same time. It is an odd way of using butter, but there is no accounting for tastes.”

Emily looked sorry, but Cousin

Hester smiled, and Nelly laughed outright.

“I don’t see the fun!” said Henry, sulkily.

“I dare say not. Jokers seldom do when the joke turns against themselves. It was not very polite in Nelly to laugh, but you should be the last to complain of that, since you are always laughing at others.”

“I’m sure I don’t care,” returned Henry. “Only if we are so poor as all that, I think it is a pity I came home at all.”

“Take care that other people don’t think the same,” said his father. “Come, eat your dinner; you will be late for school.”

“I don’t want any dinner,” said Henry, pushing away his plate. He would have liked to make his

father a saucy answer, but something told him he had better not do so just then. He rose from the table.

“Since you do not want any dinner, you may take the broom and sweep off the walk before the house,” said his father. “Cousin Hester, we are ready for your blackberry pudding, I believe.”

Henry did not like the idea of missing the blackberry pudding, of which he was particularly fond, but his pride would not let him ask permission to sit down again. He took the broom and went about his work. Vexed as she had been, and with good reason, Cousin Hester felt very sorry for Henry, and interceded for him. “He is only a boy, after all, and I dare say does not mean any harm,” said she. “It is

a pity for him to go without his dinner. I am afraid it will make him sick. Sha'n't I call him in?"

"No," replied Mr. Willson. "It was his own choice to go without his dinner. He needs a lesson, and a little fasting will do him no harm for once."

"Papa used often to go without his dinner in Kansas, didn't you, papa?" said Nelly.

"Yes, and was glad to get my supper when and how I could," replied Mr. Willson. "I well remember one day when I had been riding all day in the rain, and had forded two or three of the swollen streams, so that I was as wet as a drowned rat and as muddy as Nelly was the other day when Jeduthun pulled her out of the mill-pond. Just at night I came to the hut of an In-

dian family, and dismounted to ask shelter. The man and his wife, two grown-up sons, and more children than I could count, were crowded into a space about as large, but not so high, as our wood-shed, but they made me welcome in their fashion, as well as another traveller who arrived shortly after me. The supper was cooking on the fire; there was a kind of apology for a table and another for a bed on one side of the fireplace. This was being very civilized for an Indian house, and I thought myself fortunate. Presently the woman rose, and taking off the cover of the pot, she fished out with her bare hands a big piece of boiled beef, which she dumped without ceremony in the middle of the table, which, judging from the grease upon it, was well used to

such treatment. Then she raked out some potatoes from the ashes and some corn bread from under the bed, all which she placed around the beef, and then invited us to eat our supper. We had neither butter nor salt, neither plates nor forks, and no knives except those we carried with us, yet I assure you we made a hearty meal. The bread, however, was beyond my power to touch or taste.

“‘I say, stranger,’ observed my fellow-traveller in an undertone, ‘it’s a pity the old woman don’t live in Lawrence.’

“‘How so?’ I asked.

“‘They might get her to bake bread to build the new court-house of,’ he replied. “‘Twouldn’t cost so much more than brick, and ’twould last longer. There ain’t no

weather ever brewed that would hurt it.' ”

“Well, for my part, I’m glad I live in a Christian land,” said Cousin Hester when she had done laughing. “I don’t see how you ever did stand it. Where did you sleep?”

“The hunter and myself slept on the bedstead. We had a very nice talk before we went to sleep; and though the bed was made of rough boards covered with a buffalo skin, and the blanket was far from fragrant, I never had a better night’s rest in my life.”

Henry heard the laughter in the dining-room over his father’s story, and at once concluded that they were laughing at him.

“You mean little thing!” said he to Nelly when she came out to go

to school. "See if I don't pay you for tattling. Before I'd be a tattletale, to run and tell every little thing—"

"I didn't tell, either," said Nelly. "It was Cousin Hester, and she didn't want to, only father made her. She wanted to call you back to have some pudding, too."

"Oh yes, of course, when she knew perfectly well that father wouldn't let me have any," said Henry, scornfully. "Never mind. See if I don't pay her off, and you too. To make such a fuss just for a joke that meant no harm!"

"But, Harry, you don't like the joke when it turns against yourself one bit better than Cousin Hester does," said Nelly. "You are always playing tricks on other people, and then laughing at them. I

don't see where the difference is, for my part."

Henry had nothing to say, only that it was very hard if a fellow was to be starved just for a little fun, and he would pay her for it. He had already thought out a plan of revenge, but delayed it till his father should be away from home. Two or three days passed, during which Henry refrained from teasing either Emily or Cousin Hester, and made himself so agreeable that his father hoped he would need no more lessons on the subject. The next Monday morning Mr. Willson went over to Hobartstown, taking with him Nelly and Emily.

"I wish I could go," said Henry.

"It will be your turn next time."

"Next time never comes," said

Henry, discontentedly, as they drove away. "It is too bad, and I wanted to go ever so much."

"Well, it is rather hard, that's a fact," returned Cousin Hester. "I know your father meant to take you this time, for he said so, but Nelly had to have some new shoes in the place of those she spoiled in the mud the other day, and they could not be bought without her. So you see it was your own fault, after all."

Henry saw it plainly enough, but the sight did not make him more amicable. Presently, Cousin Hester heard a great cackling and squalling among the hens, of which they kept quite a number. She went out to see what was the matter, and could not help laughing, though she was vexed enough. An old tin

pan, filled with tar, had been standing in the barn for some time. This pan Henry had placed in the chicken-yard and strewed the top with tempting food, to which the poor chickens, suspecting nothing wrong, had liberally helped themselves, and the result may be guessed. Miss Hester laughed at first, but her laughter was changed into indignation as she saw in a moment how the poor creatures were suffering. Pecking eagerly at the food, they had plunged their beaks into the soft tar, which clogged their beaks and nostrils so that they could not breathe, and three or four of them were literally suffocating. Cousin Hester hastened to their rescue, but tar, as we all know, is a thick, impure, resinous, sticky substance, and two fine

hens died before she could relieve them.

Anything like cruelty to animals was sure to rouse Cousin Hester's wrath to the utmost.

"So you are at your old tricks!" she said to Henry as he came home to dinner that day. "You thought it a fine joke to set that pan of tar in the chicken-yard."

"I heard one of the hens cough, and I always heard tar was good for coughs," said Henry, while his eyes twinkled with fun.

"But you did not think you were going to kill two of your own hens," pursued Cousin Hester.

"My own hens!—not those black Spanish hens Ezra Parsons gave me?" exclaimed Henry.

"The very same," returned Cousin Hester. "I did all I could for

them, but the poor things choked to death before I could get them out. Harry Willson, what do you think will become of you if you are such a wicked, cruel boy?"

"I didn't mean to kill them, and you know I didn't," said Henry, angrily; "I only meant to have some fun."

"You meant to hurt them, if not to kill them," replied Cousin Hester, "and at the best you did not care whether you hurt them or not."

"You might have saved them if you had chosen," said Henry, still more angrily; "but then they were my hens, and so you didn't care what happened to them. I dare say Nelly's hens are safe enough."

"I took them as I could catch them, without thinking whether they were yours or Nelly's," replied

Cousin Hester. "I hope I am too much of a Christian to revenge myself, Henry Willson, and, above all, on a dumb beast. Nobody but a mean, contemptible coward would hurt a poor innocent creature which couldn't defend itself."

"Do you mean to say I am a coward?" asked Henry.

"I mean to say that nobody but a coward would hurt a poor dumb creature just for the sake of amusement," returned Miss Hester. "You can apply the words for yourself."

Henry flung away, very angry and determined on revenge. "Hateful old maid!" he said to himself as he examined the bodies of his beautiful Spanish hens. "I'll drive her away from this family—where she is always making trouble one way or another—anyhow. I'll make

the house too hot to hold her, or my name is not Harry Willson."

As Harry was coming home from school that night he found two snakes which somebody had lately killed. Boonville was rather a famous place for snakes, which sometimes crept into the cellars, especially where milk was kept. Harry carried them home, and hanging one on the milk shelf in the cellar and putting the other on the stairs, he quietly waited the result.

CHAPTER III.

IN a few minutes Henry heard the sound of wheels and then the voice of his sister in the kitchen.

“Look, Hester, what nice butter! Mrs. Dennison came out to the gate and stopped us as we were riding by, and insisted on our taking home this dish of butter, which she had just worked over. Isn’t it nice?”

“First rate,” replied Cousin Hester. “Nobody knows what belongs to good butter better than Squire Dennison’s folks. I will take it down cellar just as quick as I get my hands out of the biscuit.”

“Oh, I will carry it down,” said Emily. “It ought to be put in a cool place directly.” She started to go down cellar, as Henry could see through the open door, and then all at once he thought of the snake on the cellar stairs. He did not mean to frighten Emily, only Cousin Hester, but it was too late now. The outside cellar door was open, and he ran toward it with a faint hope that he might be in time, but as¹ he reached the top of the step he heard an exclamation and a heavy fall. He jumped down the steps and entered the cellar. Emily lay on the ground at the foot of the stairs, apparently insensible, and bleeding profusely. Her foot had tripped on the dead snake, which Henry had laid about half-way down the somewhat dangerous

stairs. She had fallen and struck her head against the rough stone wall with such force as to stun her entirely, while her face was cut with a piece of the dish which she had in her hand.

Henry's cries brought his father and Miss Hester to the spot, and Emily was carried up into the kitchen, where she soon came to herself.

"I don't know exactly how it happened," said she in answer to her father's question. "My impression is that there was a snake on the stairs, and that I stepped on it. I am sure I trod on something cold and slippery that slid from under me. I suppose I cut myself with the dish."

"It was well it was no worse," said her father. "The cut comes so near your eye that a little more

would have destroyed the sight. Nelly, bring me the black box on my bureau. This cut must be closed directly, or it will leave a bad scar. Wait, Henry. Where are you going?"

"To see if I can find the snake," said Henry, rather confused.

He had hoped to carry off and hide the two dead snakes before his father saw them.

"Never mind that now. I dare say there is no snake in the case. I wish you to drive the horse over to the mill directly. Mr. Antis wants to use him. Don't wait," he added, as Henry lingered. "Mr. Antis is waiting for the horse this minute."

"It won't take me long just to go down cellar," Henry began.

"Go at once, my son, and come

back as quickly as you can. I may want you."

Henry would have slipped into the cellar from the outside if he could have done so without being seen, but he knew the kitchen door was wide open on that side, and he drove off, wishing that he need not come back. Perhaps by fast driving he might get home before any one found the snake, and at this thought he whipped up the horse and drove down to the mill as fast as he could go.

"Hallo, young man! Is that the way they drive other people's horses out in Kansas?" asked Mr. Antis, who was standing at the mill door and was in no wise pleased to see his horse so treated.

"Father told me you were waiting for the horse, and I was in a

hurry to get back," said Henry, excusing himself. "My sister has fallen down stairs and hurt herself. I am sure I am sorry, Mr. Antis, but I don't think the horse is hurt at all."

"Oh, I dare say not, only it is best to be careful, especially with borrowed horses," replied good-natured Mr. Antis. "Did you say your sister had hurt herself? How did she do it?"

"She fell down the cellar stairs and hit her head, but father thinks it is not very bad. I must not wait, though. Father is very much obliged to you for the horse."

Henry ran all the way back to the house and slipped into the cellar. The snakes were gone.

"What a fool I was!" said he to himself. "I might have run down

and got them directly. Now there will be another fuss. I am sure I wish I had not put them there at all, but who would have thought of Emily's going down the first thing? How dreadfully she did look! Oh, if she should be sick and die, what would become of me?"

Henry went out to the chicken-yard, and threw some food to the hens. The sight reminded him of his own loss.

"Everything turned out badly to-day," said he to himself. "Seems to me I have done nothing but get into scrapes. I thought so much of those hens, and then they must go and choke themselves, the stupid things! I never thought of the tar doing them any hurt. I only meant to tease Cousin Hester a little. I have a great mind to say I never

will play off another joke as long as I live."

It would have been well for Henry if he had said so, and kept his word. As he stood leaning over the chicken-pen he heard Miss Hester call him :

"Henry, your father wants you. Come in, quick!"

Henry certainly did not come in very quickly, but he came and met his father in the kitchen.

"Come to your supper, my son," said Mr. Willson.

"Isn't Emily coming?" asked Henry as Cousin Hester sat down to pour out the tea.

"Emily is in bed, and likely to stay there for the present," said Cousin Hester, shortly, and with anything but an agreeable expression.

"I didn't think she was so badly

hurt as that," said Henry, in rather an unsteady voice.

"Eat your supper, my son," said Mr. Willson again. "After that I shall want to have a talk with you."

Henry had not much appetite for his supper, but he delayed over it as long as he decently could. Hardly a word was spoken by any one, and Nelly went up stairs two or three times to see if Emily wanted anything. When Henry had finished, Mr. Williams called him into his study. There lay the two snakes stretched out on a newspaper. Henry felt that he was "in for it," as he said, but he determined to make the best defence he could.

"Looking in the cellar for the cause of Emily's fall," said Mr. Willson, "I found these two dead snakes—one at the foot of the stairs

and the other on the milk shelf. They have been dead some time, and therefore could not have crawled there of themselves. Can you tell me anything about them?"

Henry looked out of the window, and was silent.

"Tell me the truth, Henry. Did you put them there?"

Henry was sorely tempted to say that he knew nothing about the snakes, but he felt pretty sure that his father would find him out if he did.

"I am sure I am very sorry," he stammered at last. "I didn't mean any harm."

"What did you mean?" asked his father, sternly.

"I meant to scare Cousin Hester a little, that's all. I was only in fun. I didn't mean any harm. I

never thought of Emily's going down there."

"Then if Cousin Hester had broken her back, or lamed herself for life, it would have been all right, I suppose?"

Henry turned pale. "Oh, father, Emily is not so bad as that, is she? She has not broken her back?"

"No, but she might easily have done so. It is a wonder that she escaped as well as she did. As it is, she is very much bruised and shaken, and may be very seriously hurt for aught I know. I am going to send some one after the doctor presently, but I do not suppose he can come to-night."

"Oh, father, do let me go!" exclaimed Henry. "Please do!"

"No, Henry, I cannot trust you. You might take a fancy to play

some fool's trick or other with the horse, and so bring us into new trouble."

Henry coloured, and the tears stood in his eyes.

"I don't know what I am to do with you," continued Mr. Willson. "I have been looking forward with pleasure all summer to the time when I could have you at home once more. You are all the son I have, and I hoped that you would be a help and a comfort as well as a credit to me, and that we might have a cheerful home, though we have lost so much that once made us happy. But during the month that you have been at home you have kept the whole family uncomfortable. You are spoiling your little sister's temper by constant teasing, gaining a bad character in

school and in the village, and seem likely enough to bring down misfortune and disgrace on all of us by your folly, to give your fault no worse name."

"Oh, father, not disgrace!" said Henry, half crying. In all his life he had never heard such severe language from his father, and he felt it deeply.

"Yes, disgrace!" replied Mr. Willson. "I am the minister of this parish, and it is my duty to teach the young as well as the old. What will they think of my teaching when they see my only son ready to engage in any scheme, however mean and cruel, which promises a little diversion or 'fun,' as you call it, ready to give pain to any and every one, even to those friends who have done the most for him, and taking plea-

sure in the pain that he inflicts? I saw Miss Hilliard this morning, and questioned her about this very thing, and she told me you keep the younger children especially in a continual ferment by your tricks and teasing, and that unless you will do differently she cannot have you in school."

"But, father—"

"I do not want to hear any excuses, Henry," said Mr. Willson, sadly. "I am sick of hearing you say 'I am only in fun.' I do not care whether it is fun or earnest, so long as your object is to injure others. You say you did not mean to hurt Emily. I conclude, then, that your trap was laid for Cousin Hester. Pray what had she done to you?"

"She is always teasing and scold-

ing me," returned Henry. "I never can do anything right in her eyes, nor in any one else's, it seems," continued Henry, growing angry. "I am sure I wish I never had come home at all, since I am in everybody's way, and a disgrace, and all the rest of it. I suppose I shall be having a stepmother next. If my mother were alive, nobody would dare to use me so."

If Henry had meant to make his father angry, he had certainly succeeded. Mr. Willson's eyes flashed as Henry had never seen them before. He put his hands on his son's shoulders and looked into his face for a full minute, while Henry's heart beat so that he could feel it. At last his father released him, and walked two or three times up and down the room.

“Go to your own room,” said he, sternly, turning to Henry, at last. “I am in no condition to deal with you at present. Go and think over the events of this day—it will be a mournful catalogue!—and add to the rest that you have succeeded in insulting your mother’s memory and wounding your father’s heart.”

Henry went to his room feeling very small indeed, and sat down by the window looking into the street. He would not have thought if he could have helped it, but thought was in a manner forced upon him. Nobody came near him, not even Nelly. He could hear Cousin Hester going about down stairs quietly doing up the work and putting away the milk, and Nelly now and then speaking or moving softly in Emily’s room. He saw his father

come out through the kitchen with his hat on, stop a moment to speak to Cousin Hester, and then go down toward the mills, and knew that he was going to send some one after the doctor, and his cheeks flushed as he remembered his father's words: "You might play some fool's trick with the horse, and bring us into fresh trouble." He noticed how anxious and unhappy his father looked, and observed, as he never had done before, how old he had grown during the last two years.

"Father's hair was black when we left Kansas, and now it is quite gray, and how he stoops! He used to be as straight as an Indian. I wish I had not said that about a stepmother. It was real mean in me, and mother has not been dead but four months. I never saw him

so angry before, not even when Quantrell's band burned our own house. He looked grieved, too, as well as angry. Oh dear! I wish I hadn't said it! I wish I didn't like to tease people!"

Just at this minute Henry heard Emily utter a kind of cry, as though something hurt her very much.

"Does it hurt you so badly to move?" asked Nelly's gentle voice.

"Yes, worse and worse all the time," replied Emily. "I am afraid my side is very much hurt. I wish the doctor would come, and then I should know the worst of it. I believe one of my ribs is broken, it hurts me so to breathe. Where is Henry?"

"He is in his room. I believe papa sent him there. Does your head ache very much?"

“It does not ache so very much, but it feels confused and giddy. Nelly, if I should be wandering in mind, you must not be scared. It would not be anything very strange. Call Cousin Hester; she will know what to do.”

Henry heard no more, and presently he saw his father come back and busy himself in feeding the cow and doing other pieces of work which properly belonged to Henry. Directly he heard Emily's voice call, in a sharp, unnatural tone, “Henry, Henry! come here directly!”

He started up and went to his sister's door, which stood open. Emily sat up in bed supported by pillows, looking eagerly toward the door. She spoke the moment she saw him:

“Henry, I want you to take a

pitcher and go up to the boiling spring in the hollow and bring me some water. This water from the well tastes so flat mother does not like it. Dip from the bottom of the spring, and don't stop to play, for fear of the snakes!"

The children looked at each other in dismay, for the spring in question was far away in Kansas. Emily spoke again :

"Come now, Harry, don't tease sister when mother is so sick and there is so much to do. Get the water as quickly as you can!"

"Call Cousin Hester or father," whispered Nelly. "She is going out of her mind. Oh dear! I wish the doctor would come!"

"Do you call him," said Henry. "Father said I must not go down stairs to-night."

Mr. Willson came up stairs, and the moment she saw him Emily again began talking in the same quick, unnatural tone, fancying herself back in Kansas, and telling her father of various things which needed to be done. Nelly burst into tears, and Henry stood in awe-struck silence, till Cousin Hester came up stairs. Cousin Hester was an experienced nurse. She at once sent every one out of the room, and persuaded Emily to lie down and be quiet. Henry went back to his own room, and sitting down by the window, he cried as if his heart would break.

“Oh, I will never do so again, never!” he said to himself. “Father is right. I do play fool’s tricks, and I am a fool. And then to think I should hurt his feelings so about

mother! I wonder if he will ever forgive me? I shouldn't think he would: only he says we ought to forgive one another, so I suppose he will. I wish I had always lived at home, and then I should have been a better boy. I never was so bad till I went to Uncle John's. There is the doctor, anyhow!" he exclaimed, starting up as some one drove up to the gate. "Oh, I do hope he will be able to save Emily. If she dies— But she won't die, I am sure she won't. Oh, if she only lives, I will try to be a better boy."

CHAPTER IV.

HENRY heard the doctor come up to his sister's room, accompanied by his father. There was a good deal of talking, and once Cousin Hester came in to get something out of the closet in Henry's room, but she did not speak to him. As she was leaving, Henry ventured to ask her,

"What does the doctor think of Emily? Is she better?"

"He says she has broken two ribs, and he is going to set them," returned Cousin Hester, shortly.

"Oh, will it hurt her much?"

"Of course. Broken bones ain't set without hurting folks, nor broke,

either," said Cousin Hester. "You had better think of that before you lay any more traps. It is no thanks to you that your sister is not dead this minute, as maybe she will be yet;" and Cousin Hester shut the door softly, but with decision.

"Cruel thing!" said Henry, but his conscience told him that Hester only spoke the truth. He listened breathlessly for sounds from Emily's room. He heard her groan two or three times, and then a sharp scream which made him turn sick and cold. The time seemed endless to him, but at last the doctor went away. Mr. Willson went down to the gate with him. Presently, Nelly came softly to her brother's door:

"Are you in bed, Henry?"

"No; come in! How is Emily?"

"She is more comfortable since the bones are set, but her mind wanders. She thinks," sobbed Nelly—"she thinks she is in Kansas, and that she ought to get up and take care of the babies because mother is sick. Oh, Henry, how could you?"

"Because I was a fool, that's all. I will never do such a thing again, that I know. Does—does the doctor think Emily will die?"

"He says he hopes not, but he cannot tell how much her head is affected, because some people get crazy with very little fever."

"Emily always did," interrupted Henry, eagerly. "Don't you remember whenever she had chills she was always out of her head? Mother never was, but Emily would be as crazy as could be, every time."

“I told the doctor so, and he said he was glad to hear it. He is coming again in the morning.”

“Who is going to take care of Emily to-night?”

“Cousin Hester is going to sit up in her room, but father says he shall not go to bed. He will lie on the lounge in the sitting-room. Oh, and he says we are to come down to prayers and then go to bed, so that the house may be quiet.”

“I don’t believe he meant to have me come down,” said Henry, who shrank from the thought of meeting his father.

“Yes, he did!” returned Nelly, positively. “He said ‘Call your brother and come down to prayers, and then you had better both go to bed.’ So please don’t wait, Henry.”

“Of course not!” said Henry,

but at the same time he felt that it would be easier to face a loaded battery than to meet his father's eyes. Mr. Willson spoke to him gravely and sadly, but not unkindly:

“Get the books and find the places, my son.”

The children read round as usual. Nelly found it hard work to steady her voice at some of the verses, and she burst out crying as Mr. Willson said, “We will not try to sing to-night.”

“Quiet, quiet, little daughter!” said her father, gently. “Remember, we must all control ourselves for dear sister's sake. We must not waste our strength in useless lamentation. We shall need all we have. Let us pray.”

When the prayers were over, Nelly kissed her father and went

up stairs to bed. Henry lingered a moment.

“Have you anything to say to me, my son?” asked Mr. Willson, seeing that Henry did not go. “If so, I am ready to hear it.”

Henry burst into tears: “Oh, father, I am so sorry! I will never do so again as long as I live. Do please forgive me, father! I can’t go to bed till you do!”

“I hope I have already forgiven you, Henry, so far as that goes,” said Mr. Willson. “But, Henry, if you ever do so again, I must punish you severely.”

“I never will, father, never!”

“Just think of the mischief you have done already this week,” continued Mr. Willson, “and see if you think your fun, as you call it, is worth what it cost. I say nothing

of your conduct for the last day or two, because I have hardly seen you, but the other night you hindered Emily so that she was obliged to sit up till midnight to finish her work. Tell me, in what consisted the fun or the wit of hiding your sister's needle and interrupting her counting? Any idiot could have done as much. Why did you do it?"

"I—I only wanted to plague her a little," stammered Henry.

"That is, you wished to make her more or less uncomfortable. Do you like to be made uncomfortable?"

"No, sir."

"Suppose that when you were doing those troublesome sums the other day I had persisted in speaking to you every two or three minutes. Would you have liked

that? If I remember, you were very much vexed with Cousin Hester for asking you one or two necessary questions."

"She put me out so," said Henry, "and I was in a hurry to learn my lesson."

"Then you do not like to be put out and hindered yourself. Do you think Emily likes it any better?"

"Emily is so good-natured she never minds," said Henry; "but I suppose that does not make matters much better for me."

"On the contrary, it makes them worse for you," said his father. "It is saying, in effect, that you will hurt her because she is too kind to hurt you back again. Is not that rather mean and cowardly?"

"It sounds so when you put it in that way," said Henry, frankly,

“but I never thought about it before.”

“Then this morning you began by teasing Nelly and trying to put her in a passion. Was that right?”

“Nelly is such a pepper pot,” said Henry, “she flies out at the least thing. If she did not get mad so quick, nobody would want to tease her.”

“Then you tease Nelly because she does get angry and Emily because she does not,” replied his father. “I should like to hear you reconcile those two statements, Henry!”

Henry was silent.

“Do you think it is right to tease people because they are easily made angry?”

“Everybody does,” said Henry.

“Everybody does not,” returned

Mr. Willson. "There are plenty of people, I am glad to say, even of those who make no pretension to religion, who are above doing the devil's work for him."

"I don't know what you mean by that," said Henry.

"The devil's work, and his pleasure, too, is in tempting men to sin; and when you try to tempt or drive others into doing wrong, you are doing his work and must expect his wages: 'the wages of sin is death.' To be sure, it is wrong in Nelly to lose her temper so easily. She knows it is wrong, and she is trying very hard to overcome this fault, but instead of helping her forward toward the kingdom of heaven, you think it is fine fun to drive her the other way."

Henry was silent.

"The next thing you did," continued his father, "was to amuse yourself by tormenting the poor hens."

"Well, father, I didn't think it would kill them, I truly didn't!" said Henry, eagerly. "I thought it would be funny to see them get their bills stuck in the tar, and to see Cousin Hester run. I was sorry enough when I saw how it turned out."

"I do not doubt it, since your own hens were the sufferers," said his father, dryly, "but I am afraid this piece of fun will not bear examination any better than the others. In what did it consist, if not in the pain and distress of the poor hens and the anxiety of Cousin Hester? Suppose the hens had merely picked the corn without

getting stuck; would there have been any fun in that?"

"I suppose not," said Henry, as his father waited for an answer.

"That you did not mean to kill them I can easily believe, but still, you meant to hurt them, and to annoy Cousin Hester. Now let us go on to the last and worst performance of all."

"Please, father, don't say any more," pleaded Henry. "I am sorry, indeed I am, and I will never do so again. Besides, I never once thought of any one's falling down the stairs. I thought Cousin Hester would see the snakes and be scared, because she is afraid of snakes."

"And you think it pleasant to be frightened, do you? When you went to the spring for water, and

the bear got between you and the house, you thought the feeling was very agreeable."

"That was different," said Henry, blushing as he remembered his great fright. "A bear is different from a dead snake."

"There was about as much danger in the one case as the other," said his father, smiling. "The bear was perfectly tame and well fed, and you had played with him over and over again."

"But I did not know it was the tame bear, father," persisted Henry. "I thought it was wild."

"And you meant Cousin Hester to know that the snakes were quite dead? You did not mean to have her think they were alive?"

Henry twisted his fingers, but made no reply.

"But you have not answered my questions," continued his father. "Do you think it pleasant to be frightened? Answer me."

"No, sir, but— Well, father, I won't do so any more," answered Henry. "I wouldn't have hurt Emily for the world, and I wouldn't have hurt Cousin Hester, either. I only wanted to scare her. The boys at Uncle John's used to be always playing such tricks, and so did the young men in the college. One day they painted all the benches in the Freshman class-room green, just before class-time, and they never noticed it, so they sat right down, and when they got up their clothes were all covered with green paint."

"And where was the fun of that?" asked his father. "I cannot see any, I am sure. I suppose—in-

deed, I know, for I have been at the college myself—that a good many of these young men were poor, and that both they and their parents were obliged to make great sacrifices in order to get them ready for college. I dare say more than one mother or sister went without a new dress, and stinted herself in more essential comforts, to buy the suits which were spoiled by the green paint, and where was the wit, after all?”

Henry did not know exactly, only that college boys always do such things.

“College boys may do them, but you shall not, at least while you are under my roof,” said Mr. Willson, sternly. “I hope you have had a lesson which you will remember as long as you live; but I give

you fair warning that the next time you indulge in any joke which has for its object the teasing or hurting of any living thing, you shall have a sound flogging."

"Oh, father!" said Henry, very much startled. He had never been whipped in his life, and he hardly knew what to make of such a threat.

"I mean exactly what I say," replied Mr. Willson. "So remember my words. You shall know by experience what it means to be hurt. You know very well that I am not given to severity, but I can be severe if necessary. I hope, however, that you will give me no occasion to fulfil my threat."

"I won't, indeed, father!" said Henry, earnestly, and at the time he meant what he said. "I will

be a good boy. I am sorry I hurt Emily, and teased Nelly and Cousin Hester, and I will never do so again. I am sorry, too, that I said that—that about a stepmother. I didn't mean anything."

Mr. Willson smiled a little sadly: "A stepmother is not always such a very bad thing, my son. Don't you know that your own dear mother was Emily's stepmother? I don't think Emily found her such a tyrant, or she would not have left her luxurious and pleasant Boston home to come and live with us out on the wild prairie in Kansas."

"Well, I never knew that before!" said Henry. "I used to wonder how mamma and Emily came to be so nearly of an age. And did Emily really have such a nice home in Boston?"

“She really had, my son. She lived with her aunt, her mother’s sister, on one of the pleasantest squares in Boston, where she had every comfort and luxury—where she could see all the pictures and read all the books she wanted, and have the most agreeable society.”

“But what made her leave her aunt, then?” asked Henry. “Was not she a nice woman?”

“Yes, she was a very nice woman, and made Emily very happy. I advise you to think about the matter, Henry, and see if you cannot find an answer to your question. One thing more, my son. You say you mean to be a good boy, but you know that you cannot make yourself good. You must ask God’s help, or you can do nothing. I should think that you would feel this.”

“Yes, father,” replied Henry, “I do.”

“Will you do this, my son? And I shall pray for you, but I can do no good unless you pray for yourself. Will you try to do this?”

“I will, truly, father. I won’t forget. I know I have been naughty, but I mean to try and do better. Good-night.”

“Good-night, my son, and may God bless you!”

Henry had thought enough to take off his shoes before he went up stairs, that he might not wake Emily if she chanced to be asleep. Cousin Hester noticed this, and put it down as a good sign; for, much trouble as Henry made her, she was fond of him, and always disposed to make the best of him, and rejoiced in any prospect of improvement.

CHAPTER V.

THE next morning Henry got up early without waiting to be called, and by the time Cousin Hester came down stairs, he had made the fire, put on the tea-kettle, ground the coffee, and swept out the kitchen, and had done all the other little things he could think of to lighten her labour in getting breakfast ready. Cousin Hester observed all these things with an approving eye.

“Come, that was good, Henry!” said she. “That helps along the work a good deal.”

“I wanted to help you,” replied Henry, much gratified with the

praise. "I thought you would be tired with sitting up all night. How is Emily this morning?"

"Well, she's quiet and rational, and she slept a little towards morning," replied Cousin Hester. "That is about as much as we can expect. I don't suppose she will be really much better for some days to come. Folks with broken bones are generally worse on the third day. I must see about getting somebody to help me—Kissy Cooke, I guess, if I can have her."

"And what will Jeduthun do?" asked Harry, with whom the miller was a great personage, as he was with all the young folks in Boonville.

"Oh, Kissy can get him his breakfast and supper, and he can go to Mr. Badger's or come here for

his dinner. Jeduthun ain't the man to mind being a little put out of his way when it is going to be a benefit to somebody."

"He would do anything for father or Emily, I know," said Henry.

"Yes, he knows their worth better than some folks who have known them longer, maybe. There ain't many boys got a better father and sister than you have, Henry Willson, whether you know it or not."

"I do know it, and I am going to try to be a good boy," said Henry; "and, Cousin Hester, I am really sorry I teased you and tried to scare you. I will never do so again, if you will forgive me this time."

"Of course I forgive you," replied Cousin Hester. "I'm a Christian woman, I hope, and I don't bear

malice. I hope you will keep your word, Henry, and leave off these fool tricks. You will get into a worse scrape even than this if you don't take care, and perhaps be the means of your father's leaving the parish. You see, being the minister's son, folks will notice everything you do, and make more of it than if you belonged to any one else."

"I don't think that is half fair," said Henry. "People are always picking at ministers' children and saying that they are so bad, and I don't believe they are worse than other people's. Do you?"

"No, I don't know as I do. I have known as many good children, in proportion, in ministers' families as in any others, but, as you say, people are always watching them.

I suppose the idea is that ministers' children ought to be better than others because they have such good instruction at home. That isn't the way with all of them, by any means, but it has been the way with you, and if you don't turn out well, it will be nobody's fault but your own."

"I never should have got in the way of doing such things if I had not gone to Uncle John's," said Henry, not quite liking to have so much responsibility thrown upon his shoulders. "The boys there are always playing tricks on each other, and nobody thinks anything of it, and of course I had to do as they did."

"I don't see the 'of course,'" said Miss Hester, dryly. "The Bible says we are not to follow a multi-

tude to do evil. Noah and Daniel and other good men lived in the midst of wicked people and idolaters, but it wasn't a matter of course with them to do as the others did, by any means. I don't like that way of saddling one's faults on somebody else's shoulders. It is easy to excuse ourselves that way, but I don't believe in it."

"But every one does it—at least a great many people do," said Henry, feeling as though Hester was rather hard on him. "When you read the confessions of people in the State's prison, or of men that are to be hung, don't you know they almost always say their fathers and mothers were bad people, or that they were led away by bad company?"

"Yes, I know, and I don't think

much of that kind of repentance," answered Cousin Hester. "I would not trust it a bit farther than I could see it. Especially, I wouldn't trust a man who laid the blame of his faults on his mother, whoever she might be. I should know he was a mean, sneaking fellow, and that the State's prison was the best place for him. But come, wash your hands now, and call your father and Nelly. I will pour out the coffee, and then go and see Emily. After breakfast I want you to run down to Jeduthun's and see if Kesiah will come and work for us to-day."

Emily continued very ill for several days, and it was more than a month before she was able to come down stairs again. During almost all this time Henry was a pretty

good boy. He helped Hester, waited upon Emily, and abstained from teasing Nelly. Hester called him a first-rate good boy, and he began to think himself so. He stayed pretty closely at home during these few weeks, coming home directly after school, and not caring to stop for play in the school-yard, or to go down to the mill-dam and the bridge, or up to the pond above, with the other boys. It had somehow or other leaked out that Henry's tricks had been the cause of his sister's misfortune, and the boys and girls who had been vexed with his teasing ways in times past were not slow to cast the same in his teeth. People in the village questioned him about the matter with more frankness than politeness; and more than once Henry had to

hear that hateful remark about ministers' sons.

"Look here, now, Sam Badger, you'd better be quiet!" said Jeduthun Cooke, one day, overhearing some such speech from Sam. "'Tain't so very long ago that I thrashed you, and your brother too, for tying crackers to old Sambo's tail. That's as bad a trick as any of Harry Willson's. A man or boy that would hurt a helpless, friendly, dumb old dog would do anything else that was mean. Harry's in trouble now, and you're all down on him. I do hate to see any one throwing stones at a lame dog."

Sam was silent, perhaps convinced by his own conscience, perhaps awed by the remembrance of the substantial thrashing aforesaid, and afraid of a repetition of the dose.

Henry was a sufferer in another way. He found out what it was to gain a bad character. Every piece of mischief which had happened for the last three months was laid at his door. It was he who had stoned General Dent's Canada geese to death as they swam in the pond. It was Henry who had barked the trees in front of the meeting-house, and drawn caricatures of the deacons on the church doors, and helped to steal old Peter's green corn : and so on of a hundred pieces of mischief concerning which he was entirely innocent. Many people pitied Mr. Willson, and others thought there must be something very much out of the way with him to have such a bad son.

Henry found all this very hard to bear. What was the use of trying

to be good when you got no credit for it? When the bad boys in the books he had read repented and amended everybody praised them, and everything went well with them afterwards, but he seemed to have more trouble than ever. Cousin Hester, too, was very provoking. She did not praise him any more when he helped about the house, and and did up his "chores" in good season without waiting to be reminded of them, and waited upon Emily. Everybody seemed to like it, as a matter of course, that he should do everything possible to help his sister and cousin, and Emily was even sharp with him sometimes, especially once when he was sent over to the Springs and got so interested in watching the ladies play croquet that he forgot

what he went after and came back without it, and she took it far too much as a matter of course, Henry thought, that he should run up and down stairs to wait on her, and bring her flowers and fruits, and so on. The fact was that Henry's goodness was all, so to speak, outside of him. His heart was not changed at all. He *loved* mischief just as well as ever, and would have practiced it as much as ever only for fear of consequences. It would be very hard work for a man to wear a mask all the time, and to alter his voice and walk and his whole manner so that nobody should know him. In fact, it would be almost impossible. This was very much what Henry was trying to do. He was trying to make everybody, himself included, believe that he was

somebody else, but the old, real Henry Willson was behind the mask all the time and longing to come out. As Emily got about again, and people grew tired of talking about the narrow escape she had had, Henry began by degrees to forget the impression her fall and illness had made upon him, and to go back by little and little to his old ways.

“Henry, you’ll get into trouble again if you don’t mind,” said Nelly to him one day, as they were going home from school together.

Henry had been at his old tricks again that day. He had slyly slipped away Fanny Hickson’s dinner-basket when she went for a drink at noon-time, and then had pretended to help her look for it, and laughed at her when she spied it at last

hung out of her reach on a high nail over the window, and he had frightened little Tommy Clarke by making him think that an old red cow was Mr. Antis's furious bull, and so kept him prisoner inside the school-house gate for half an hour. These things had troubled Nelly considerably, and she could not help speaking of them.

"First you know, you will be falling into your old ways again, and you will do something dreadful. Father wouldn't like it a bit, nor Miss Hilliard, either, if they knew what you have done to-day."

"I suppose you mean to go straight and tell him?" said Henry.

"I sha'n't do any such thing, and you know I sha'n't," returned Nelly.

"I am no telltale, and that you ought to know by this time, Henry

Willson. But I don't think you ought to do so after you have said that you meant to be a good boy, and promised father that you would never play tricks again."

"Oh, you make a great fuss about nothing," said Henry, carelessly. "I haven't done anything so very bad."

"Not so very bad, perhaps, but you know you haven't done right," returned Nelly, positively. "You wouldn't like it if any one should hide *your* dinner-basket; and besides, Harry," the little girl added, sagely, "I know just how it will be. If you once begin teasing again, *ever so little*, the first you know, you will be just as bad as ever."

"Was that what made you so mad this morning when Miss Hiliard made you say your lesson

over?" asked Henry in a taunting tone.

Nelly blushed, and her eyes flashed, but she answered bravely, after an instant's delay: "Yes; it was that very thing. I began by getting vexed because my boot-lacing was in a knot, so I twitched it out and broke it. Then Emily said I could not have another because I had broken so many lately, and that made me more vexed still, and hindered me besides, so that I was late at prayers, and I got so *stirred up* that I was ready to be provoked at anything. If I had stopped and made myself feel good-natured over the knot, I don't believe the rest would have happened at all."

Henry was a little touched by this frank confession. "Well, you

are a good little thing, Nell, and I won't plague you, anyhow. But I do think it is hard if a fellow can't have a bit of fun. I think I have got a right to it, after working hard all day."

"Not that kind of fun, Henry—not fun which troubles other people. Besides, I know you will get into a scrape by it. Remember how you felt about Emily. You were only going to have a bit of fun then, and see how it turned out. Please, Harry, do be careful! Think if father *should* —"

"Oh, don't you fret! I'll be careful enough, you'll see!" said Henry. In his heart he did not believe that his father would whip him, and then he did not mean to do anything to deserve it. He meant to be a good boy—in fact, he *was* a

good boy already. To be sure, he had teased Fanny a little, but that was only a joke. He had not done anything naughty in a long time, and he did not think he ever should again. He felt quite secure, and security is always a dangerous state. He was a little more careful the next day, and the next, but by degrees he began to grow heedless, and the children said, "Harry Willson is at his old tricks again." He did not tease Nelly so much, because he was afraid that his father would find him out, but he exercised his talents on the younger children and the girls, till Miss Hiliard began to think seriously of asking his father to take him out of school.

One day quite a number of the boys and girls were playing after

school on the banks of the upper mill-pond, as it was called. This pond was not on the little river which flowed through Boonville, but on a much smaller stream, which came into it above the village, and it was formed by damming up the brook where it ran through a hollow, and thus causing it to overflow a piece of land some five or six acres in extent. The pond had been made by a man named Short, and was called Short's Pond, and sometimes Short's Folly. It was a very pretty place. The land sloped gently down to the water, and in some places the woods grew quite to the edge. A good many little fish and other curious creatures lived therein, such as newts and turtles and tadpoles, or polywogs, as we Americans call

them, and the wood was a famous place for chestnuts in the fall, flowers in the spring, and birds, chip-monks, and squirrels at all times.

There was also a tragical fame attached to Short's Pond which gave it a kind of fearful interest in the eyes of the children. It was an unlucky piece of water. A good many people had been drowned in it—six at one time. These six were the niece and children of a farmer who lived near the bank. The father and mother were away one day, and the children thought it would be a nice time to take their cousin out in the boat; so out they all went, except the eldest daughter, who stayed at home to get supper ready against their return. They had often been out in the flat-bottomed boat, and had no fears; the

day was lovely, and danger not once thought of. Nobody knew exactly what happened, for nobody returned to tell the tale, and the only witness was a paralytic old man seated helpless in the porch of his own dwelling; but in the middle of the pond the boat sank, and every one was drowned. Six corpses were recovered and laid out in the large, cheerful farm-house, which never was cheerful again. Another time a man from the next village, who was fishing in the pond on Sunday, was drowned, with a workman from the saw-mill who tried to save him. The water was very deep in places, and there were said to be curious currents setting in different directions. All these circumstances made the children in the neighbourhood regard Short's pond with

a certain awe, which did not, however, detract from its interest as a place of resort.

The farm-house where the drowned children had lived was now inhabited by a man named Chapman, sufficiently well-to-do as to this world's goods, but known to all the region round about as an irreligious man. He used profane language, never lost an opportunity of insulting the feelings of pious people, and utterly refused to let his wife go to church or his children to Sunday-school. He said the Bible and the parson's sermons might all be true for aught he knew—he did not care a rotten apple whether or not; he was not going to have anything to do with them.

With all his wickedness, Chap-

man had some good points. He was an honest man in his dealings, paid his debts, provided liberally for his wife and children, and was kind to them in a rough way, denying them no indulgence except that which they valued most—the privilege of religious teaching and worship. Mrs. Chapman declared that on these points her husband was insane. He was especially fond of his children, both of whom were unfortunate. Willy, the boy, about twelve years old, was lame from the effects of hip disease, which had left one leg shorter than the other. He was a good little fellow, and a favourite with Mrs. Hilliard and all the children. Mr. Chapman was determined that Willy should have the best education that money would buy; and though he grum-

bled at Miss Hilliard's reading the Bible and praying in school, and regularly objected to this at every school-meeting, he had the sense to understand her merits as a teacher, and to see that Willy was doing as well with her as he could do anywhere. The little girl, Lucy, aged nine, was a most beautiful child—so lovely that strangers passing along the road stopped to look at her. But she, too, was afflicted. She had some strange disease which nobody understood, and which often laid her on her back for days, and even weeks, helpless as a young baby, and racked with fearful pains and convulsions. Everything must have a name, so the doctors called Lucy's trouble a form of spinal disease, but they could do nothing for her, though the doctors at the

Springs hoped that if she lived she might outgrow the difficulty.

Poor Lucy, as I said, wanted for no indulgence that money could buy. Her father had even given her a Bible bound in small volumes, so that she could use it on the bed, with only the proviso that it should be kept out of his sight. Lucy was fond of pets, and only two or three days before the one of which I am speaking Mr. Chapman had gone all the way over to the Springs to bring her one. He had heard that Mr. Lee, the druggist, had some real Japanese kittens, and he had taken the ride on purpose to beg or buy one of these kittens for Lucy.

From the first, Mr. Willson had taken a great interest in Chapman.

He was used to dealing with

hard cases out on the border. He thought the man must have good in him, from his kindness to his family, and he had determined to try and gain an influence over him. In this he had in some measure succeeded. Chapman allowed that the parson had seen something of life, could tell a good story, and had some notion of things outside his profession. Mr. Willson had never once mentioned the subject of religion to him, and while Chapman professed to think this a mark of the parson's sense, in his secret soul it made him rather uneasy.

"Mr. Willson," said he, one day, to the minister, "why don't you ever talk to me about religion?"

"Where would be the use, Mr. Chapman?" asked Mr. Willson, gravely.

Chapman was rather taken aback.

"Why, I don't know. You might do some good. Who can tell?"

"If you were an ignorant or stupid or careless man, I should talk to you," said Mr. Willson; "I should try to teach you and to awaken you. But you are none of these things. You are intelligent and well instructed; you know your duty well enough, and why should I repeat it to you? Your responsibility is heavy enough, and too heavy, already. Why should I wish to add to it? I would rather not. I don't mean to offend you, Mr. Chapman, but I have thought about the matter, and this is the conclusion I have come to."

"Oh, I ain't offended," said Mr. Chapman, rousing himself, as it seemed, from a brown study. "You

know your own trade, I suppose. If you are coming our way, drop in and see us; I've got some colts I should like to show you."

It was only a few days after this conversation that the children were at play on the banks of the pond near Mr. Chapman's house. Willy Chapman, who was a very ingenious little fellow, had just finished a small vessel which was the admired of all beholders. It was a sloop, and by the help of his father, who had once been a sailor on the great lakes, he had rigged it correctly in every particular. It was a good-sized vessel, nearly or quite two feet long, well-proportioned, and an excellent sea-boat. Ezra Parsons had been present at the launching of the Sylvia—Willie had called the sloop after his mother—

and it was his report of her beauties and excellences which had brought the boys up to Short's Folly this evening. Willie was quite ready to exhibit his favourite. There was a gentle breeze blowing off shore, and raising just enough "sea" to exhibit the good qualities of the *Sylvia* to perfection. Securely tied to the end of a long kite-line, she was launched amid the plaudits of the spectators, and, her voyage performed, was safely drawn back again to land.

"You ought to have some passengers to send in her," said Ezra Parsons. "If I were you, I would make some for her."

"I told Willy he might take my old doll if he liked," said Lucy Chapman, who had come down to the shore with her brother, and

stood with her new kitten snuggled up in her arms, among the other spectators. It was one of poor Lucy's "good times," as she called them, and the good time had lasted so much longer than usual that her mother began to be hopeful about her.

Lucy had had no fits for six weeks, and she seemed to be gaining strength and flesh.

"I don't know as I should think so very much of doll passengers," replied Willy. "I've thought sometimes that I would train a squirrel or a mouse to sail on the Sylvia for a captain. I suppose Lucy wouldn't let me have her precious kitten?" he added, smiling at his sister.

"Oh no, indeed!" exclaimed Lucy, hugging her kitten yet more closely. "She would be so scared,

and perhaps she might be drowned. I couldn't let you have her."

Willy laughed, as did the other children, at Lucy's earnestness. He had no thought of taking the kitten away from his sister, or even pretending to do so, for he was not a boy to find pleasure in teasing, but there was another boy present whose disposition was very different. Henry Willson was standing by, a little out of humour. He wanted to buy the ship, and Willy would not sell it, or even lend it to him. He saw at once a fine chance for a joke, as he called it, for teasing Lucy, Willy, and the kitten all at once.

"Look there, Lucy!" said he. "See those wild ducks away out there on the pond, almost at the island! What a lot of them!"

Lucy strained her eyes to see the supposed wild ducks, and all the children followed her example. Profiting by her momentary forgetfulness of her pet, Henry snatched the kitten, which was quite small, from her arms, set it on the deck, and giving the vessel a sudden push with his foot, sent it out into the deep water, crying out as he did so, "See, now! the Sylvia has got a captain and passenger."

Henry had fully determined to keep the string in his hand, and to pull the vessel back so soon as he had given Lucy and the rest "a good scare," as he said. Unfortunately, he did not succeed in doing so. The wind had freshened considerably; the vessel pulled at her string, which was drawn from

Henry's grasp, and the Sylvia, with its precious freight, was borne rapidly out of all reach, and towards the centre of the deep and dangerous pond.

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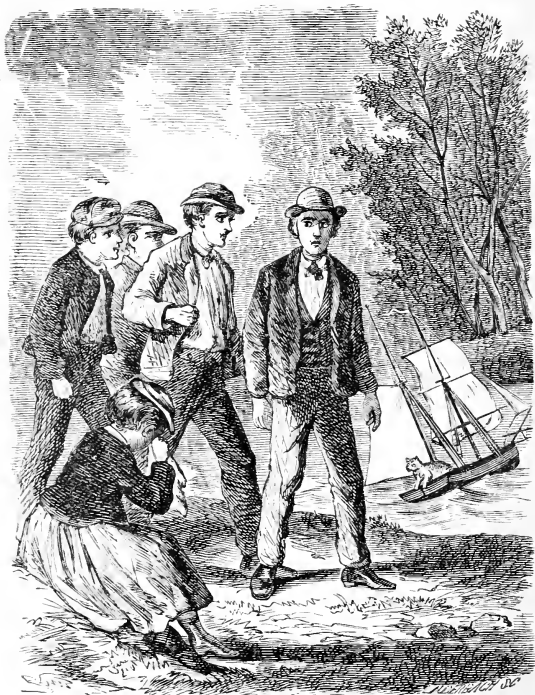
CHAPTER VI.

THE whole was done so quickly that neither Lucy nor any of the other children realized what had happened till the little vessel was several rods from shore, and rapidly going farther off, while poor pussy mewed piteously, as if quite conscious of her danger and begging for succour. In a moment, however, Lucy understood what had happened, and burst into a flood of tears, while Willy turned fiercely on Henry.

“You mean sneak!” he exclaimed; “you cowardly brute you! I wish I was big enough to throw you into the water after her.”



Only in Fun.



"Oh, my Kitty!" sobbed Lucy: "can't you do something?"
Oh, do save her!"

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"*I'd* do it quick enough, if it would do any good," said Ezra Parsons. "I'd go in after her, only my broken leg won't let me swim yet."

"Oh, my kitty! my poor little kitty!" sobbed poor Lucy as another agonized mew came over the water. "Oh, just see her reach out her little white paws to us! Can't you do *something*? Oh, do save her!"

"Is there a boat anywhere round here, Will?" asked Ezra.

"No, only Babbage's old scow, and he has taken that over to the other side of the pond to-day. It's no use, anyway. She'll soon go over with this wind. Yes, there she goes!" as the little vessel gave a lunge and was no more to be seen. "It's too bad!" exclaimed Willy, bursting into tears. "My

pretty vessel, and the kitty, and all. Henry Willson, you ought to be ashamed!"

"I didn't mean to, Willy," Henry began, but Ezra interrupted him:

"Oh no, you never *mean to*! That is always the story. You didn't mean to when you made your sister fall down stairs and 'most kill herself. You meant to play a mean fool's trick, and that was enough. I'll tell your father as sure as I am alive, Henry Willson, see if I don't."

"What's all this, what's all this?" said a rough but not unkind voice behind them. "Lucy and Will both crying! Has anything happened to the famous ship? Never mind, we'll build another. Where's kitty, Lucy? Don't she want some more milk by this time?"

Mr. Chapman spoke with the in-

tention of diverting Lucy from her grief for the loss of the ship, but his words only produced a fresh outburst: "Kitty's dead! Oh, pa, kitty's drowned! Henry Willson put her in the vessel and sent her adrift, and she's drowned in the pond. Oh dear! what shall I do?"

Chapman's face grew black with anger, and grasping Henry by the shoulder, he said in a suppressed voice, "Did you drown her kitten?"

"I only meant to scare her," whispered Henry.

"You only meant to scare her! Well, I only mean to give you a thrashing, that's all;" and Chapman, as good as his word, uplifted his horsewhip and bestowed upon Henry such a flogging as he had never dreamed of before. The other boys stood by, not daring,

and perhaps not very much wishing, to interfere, till Willy exclaimed in alarm,

“Oh, father, don’t kill him! Oh, dear father, look at Lucy! You are scaring her to death.”

Lucy had indeed sunk white and senseless on the grass. The sight brought the enraged man to his senses in some degree. He released Henry, and stooping down, raised his little girl tenderly in his arms.

“Come along, Will,” said he, sharply. “I hope you have had enough of parsons and their sons this time. As for you, sir, you come round my place again, or your father, either, and I’ll pitch you into the pond. You may just tell your father so, and tell him he needn’t say a word to me again about going

to Sunday-school, or church, either. Do you hear?"

It was doubtful if Henry did hear, for he was too thoroughly stupefied with pain and fright to really comprehend what had happened to him.

"Come away, can't you?" said Ezra Parsons, taking him by the arm and leading him off. "Do you want another licking? I should think you had had enough of it."

"I don't blame Chapman one bit," said David Brown, coming to the other side of Henry to help him along, however. "It was the meanest thing I ever saw done, and thee deserved a thrashing. I hope thy father will give thee another."

"I tell you I didn't mean to," cried Henry, exasperated by these repeated attacks. "Can't you be-

lieve a fellow when he says he didn't mean anything?"

"No, not when the fellow is always playing tricks like thee does," returned David, whose grammar was apt to become involved in times of excitement, and whose "Friendly" education had not quite subdued his native warlike spirit. "Didn't mean to, indeed!" he added, in deep contempt. "What did thee mean to do, then?"

"I only meant to tease Lucy a little," returned Henry. "I thought I would make her believe that I was going to set the kitten afloat, but I had no notion of doing it. I meant to keep the string in my hand, and pull the vessel in again, but it slipped away from my hand. I'm sure I wish I hadn't!" he added, crying. "It was a fool's

trick, as Ezra says, and a mean trick, and I promised father I would never play one again. You mayn't believe me, but I *am* sorry, for though I didn't mean to drown the kitten, I did mean to scare Lucy, and that was almost as bad."

"If thee's sorry, there is no more to be said," returned David, in a milder tone.

"I hope it is a sorrow that will last and do some good," said Ezra. "Henry was awful sorry before, when Miss Emily was hurt, but he seemed to get over it again, and if he is ever so sorry, it won't help the children any. Lucy's fits are always brought on by crying, they say, and there's poor Will. He was feeling so good because his father had said that he might go to church and Sunday-school if he

wanted to. How disappointed he will be!"

"Why, don't you think his father will let him go now?" asked Henry.

"Well, you heard what he said, and Chapman ain't apt to go back on his word," replied Ezra. "He would never let a minister come near him before your father. Pa and Deacon Lee were talking about it last week, and pa said he couldn't help having hopes that Mr. Willson would bring Chapman into the kingdom, and they must all be very careful in their ways towards him."

"And just as like as not he won't let father come near him again," said Henry, crying afresh. "I wish I was dead! I wish I had been dead before I ever went up there this afternoon. There's no use in my ever trying to do anything right,

or be anybody ;” and Henry threw himself down on the grass and gave way to his grief. The two boys exchanged glances. They began to be sorry for him.

“I guess I’d go home, if I was you, and tell my father all about it,” said Ezra, more kindly. “That’s the way I always do, and I always find it best in the end. Come, now, be a man! Perhaps it may not turn out so bad, after all.”

“It won’t be anything but bad for me,” said Henry, “but I do mean to tell father all about it, though he said he’d whip me if I ever did so again ; but I don’t care so much for that.”

“I don’t believe he will, now,” said David Brown. “Thy father is a good man, not like poor Will. Anyhow, Henry, thee will feel bet-

ter to tell him the truth, only don't begin to excuse thyself and say thee 'didn't mean.' That isn't the right way."

"Where's father?" asked Henry, looking in at the kitchen door.

Miss Hester started, as well she might, at Henry's appearance, for he was as pale as death, and his voice was husky.

"Goodness, Henry! How you startled me! What is the matter?"

"Never mind, now; I want to see father. Is he in his study?"

"No, he's out in the barn seeing something about his harness."

"So much the better," thought Henry. He preferred to be out of Emily's hearing while he told his story.

"Father, I've got something to tell you," said Henry, firmly, as he

entered the little room in the barn where his father was putting his harness to rights. "I'm afraid you will be very angry, but I can't help it now."

Mr. Willson looked up in amazement at Henry's pale face and disordered dress. "Why, my son, what has happened to you? Have you been hurt?"

Henry began, and told his story straight through without stopping, and in as few words as might be. Mr. Willson listened in silence, and when Henry had ended, he said, "Is that all?"

"Yes, sir, there isn't any more to tell. I should think that was enough," said Henry, bitterly.

"Quite enough, certainly. Henry, how could you do so, after what you promised me—after the lesson

you have had so lately? What am I to think of you?"

"Think that I was a fool, and shall never be anything else," said Henry. "You had better send me away somewhere, where I sha'n't disgrace you any more. And yet I did mean to be a good boy after this. Oh dear! how sick I do feel!" and overcome by pain and distress, Henry reeled and would have fallen if his father had not caught him.

"You had better go to bed now, my son," said his father, seeing plainly that Henry was in no state to bear farther excitement; "you will feel better after you have rested a little, and then we will talk over this bad business. Come, let me help you into the house."

"Won't you stay with me, please,

father?" whispered Henry, after he had got to bed with his father's help.

"Why, are you afraid?" asked Mr. Willson, rather surprised, for Henry was usually no coward.

"No, sir, but I feel so badly."

"In so much pain?"

"It isn't that," burst forth Henry. "I have been such a mean fellow that nobody thinks I can be anything else but mean, but I don't care for the pain. It is Lucy and Willy, and the poor kitten, that I care about. I never shall forget how the poor thing mewed and reached out its little paws. I can see and hear it now, and see Lucy's white face—"

Henry's voice was lost in sobs.

"And I did mean to be good and never do so again," he began once

more. "I thought I had got all over wanting to do mischief. Oh dear! what shall I do if Mr. Chapman takes Willy out of school! It is the greatest comfort of his life—I heard him say so—and then Willy was so glad to think he could go to Sunday-school, and all."

Mr. Willson sat down by the bedside grieved at heart, yet rejoicing to see that Henry's sorrow seemed to be of the right sort—not so much for himself as for the consequences of his fault.

"I am as sorry as you can be, my son. It is very unfortunate in many ways. I thought I had gained a great point in persuading Chapman to let Willy come to Sunday-school and to church, and I was not without hopes of influencing the man himself. I have thought I per-

ceived signs of softening and uneasiness in him, as though his conscience were being awakened. I am afraid he will be wholly set against me, for he worships Lucy, as you know. Then there has lately been a great improvement in Lucy's health. They were very hopeful about her. If this distress about the kitten should bring on a return of her fits, both Mr. and Mrs. Chapman might be excused for feeling hardly towards me as well as you."

"It wouldn't be fair," said Henry. "You hadn't anything to do with it."

"Perhaps not, but we are all governed by our feelings more than our judgment in such cases, unless prevented by the power of God. I fear it would be hard for me to like a

perfectly innocent man, if his name happened to be Quantrell."

"Yes, because Quantrell burned our house and barn," said Henry, thoughtfully. "I see. I should feel just so."

"Then you need not wonder at the feeling in such a man as Chapman."

Henry was silent for a while, and his father thought he was falling asleep, when he spoke again in a very low tone:

"Father!"

"Well, my son."

"Do you think God will ever forgive me if Lucy should die, and if Mr. Chapman shouldn't—" Henry could not finish the sentence.

"God will surely forgive you if you are truly sorry, and if you ask him, my son. If I did not believe

that, there would be little use in my preaching."

"But if I should prevent Mr. Chapman from ever being a Christian, father, it don't seem as if I could ever be happy again, even if God did forgive me."

"Henry," said his father, "do you remember that the Apostle Paul was consenting to the death of Stephen?"

"Yes, but that was different. If he had kept Stephen from being a Christian at all, that would have been like me."

There was some exaggeration in this feeling of Henry's, as Mr. Willson well knew, but he was not disposed to smile at it. He knew that Henry felt just as he said.

"You are borrowing trouble a little, my son," said he. "We do

not know for certain that this action of yours will prevent Mr. Chapman from becoming a Christian. On the contrary, we cannot tell but the Lord may make it a means of good to him, after all. You were right, however, in thinking it a very serious matter to have offended him. It is a terrible thing to cast a stumbling-block in our neighbour's way. Our Lord himself says so."

"I know," said Henry, with a groan. "I remember what he says about offences. Oh, father, what shall I do?"

"You must humbly and earnestly ask him to forgive you, my son, and to wash away your sins, as he has promised to do. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, not only to forgive us our sins, but to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

You must remember that his promises are just as true as his threatenings."

"Will you ask him for me, father?" said Henry, in a low tone.

"Yes, my son." Mr. Willson knelt down and prayed by Henry's bedside, and the poor boy joined in the prayer with all his heart.

"Do you feel better, now?" asked Mr. Willson, after a little silence.

"I don't know," said Henry, despondingly. "It don't seem much use to ask forgiveness, because I am afraid I shall do the very same thing again. I thought when Emily fell and hurt herself that I should never want to do another piece of mischief, but I did. I liked it just as well as ever, after a little while, and I am afraid it will be just so again."

“But the Lord can keep you from doing mischief, my son. He can change your heart and disposition, so that you will no longer take pleasure in doing anything that will give pain to others—no longer take pleasure in deceiving or playing tricks.”

“Why, father, do you think so?” asked Henry, raising himself on his arm and looking at his father. “Do you really think he does that, and that he will do it for me? Oh, that would be better than anything, but it don’t seem possible.”

“It is what he has done for me, my dear boy, and for thousands and millions besides me, so I do not know why he should not do it for you. That is what we mean by conversion. It is a change which takes place, sometimes suddenly,

sometimes very gradually, but it does take place with all who become true disciples of the Lord. It is this change, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, which you need to pray for most earnestly."

Henry was silent a long time, as if thinking deeply. Then he said, with a deep sigh, "If I could only make any amends!"

"You might, perhaps, get Lucy a Japanese cat, and Willy some toy to replace his vessel."

"I might give him my clock-work steamboat," said Henry: "it is as good as new; and I will go over to the Springs and get Mr. Lee to save another kitten for Lucy. But Willy won't care so much about the steamboat, because he did not make it, and poor Lucy will be too sick to care about the kitten even

if— Oh, if Lucy should die, what should I do?”

“My son, do you wish to begin doing right *now*, at once?” asked Mr. Willson.

“Yes, father.”

“Then you will try to compose yourself and go to sleep, that you may not be sick to-morrow. Will you try to do this?”

“Yes, father; I won’t say another word or think another thought if I can help it,” answered Henry, humbly. “If you will please read to me or sing a hymn for me, I will try hard to go to sleep.”

Mr. Willson began to repeat in a low voice the thirty-second and fifty-first psalms. Henry lay quite still, with his eyes closed, and at last dropped into an uneasy slumber.

CHAPTER VII.

THERE is a current setting towards the island, and almost everything which gets afloat in the upper part of the pond is stranded there."

Henry woke from his first sleep with these words sounding in his ears. Had he dreamed them, or had they really been spoken in his hearing? He roused himself up and listened, and as he did so became aware that somebody was talking in the kitchen below. "It was there they found the body of the poor man that was drowned fishing," the voice continued. "Tell you what, that's a mighty curious

and dangerous piece of water. I don't know if it's the shape of the ground, or what, but the current in it is mighty curious. I wouldn't like to trust myself in it; I know that."

Henry knew whose voice it was by this time. Jeduthun Cooke, the miller, was talking to his father in the kitchen. He often came up after his day's work to chat with the minister, to bring Miss Emily a bunch of fresh fish or some fruit from his garden, or to borrow or return a book. Henry listened eagerly, and heard his father say, "Then you think it possible that Willy's ship may have stranded on the island, after all?"

"Just as likely as not."

"I have a great mind to go out there and see," said Mr. Willson.

"I wouldn't, Mr. Willson," returned Jeduthun. "'Tain't worth while risking your life for a toy, and I tell you that's a mighty curious piece of water."

"I should almost think you were superstitious about the matter, Jeduthun," said Mr. Willson.

Jeduthun laughed his peculiar, musical, bubbling laugh, which came like water out of the spring. "Well, maybe I am. I don't pretend to be wiser 'n other folks. Anyhow, I wouldn't go on that pond 'thout 'twas to save somebody, or something like that. I'd rather make Will Chapman a whole fleet of ships. Well, good-night, Mr. Willson. Good-night, Miss Hester. I hope the fish 'll be good."

Henry lay thinking a long time after he heard the door close and

Jeduthun's whistle had died away in the distance. Willy's ship would be found on the island, Jeduthun said. Was it not possible—just barely possible—that the kitty might be there too? Henry did not feel at all sure that the sloop had upset. The water was rough, and the gathering mist had hidden the vessel from sight. If he could find the sloop it would be something, but if he could himself recover the kitten and take her home, perhaps Mr. Chapman would forgive him and let Will come to school again. Henry shared with the other children in the superstitious terrors attached to Short's Pond. He would never have dared to go boating on its waters for pleasure, and he would not have had his father go for the world, but he

thought there would be nothing wrong in his venturing for such an object to cross over to the island. He fell asleep at last, but not till he had quite decided what to do.

The next morning Henry was up with the first gray dawn, and dressed in his oldest suit of clothes. He said his prayers, and wrote a little note to tell his father where he had gone, and then climbing out of his window to the roof of the shed, as he had often done before, he slipped softly to the ground, and set out for the pond by the shortest path — through the orchard and across Mr. Antis's pasture. He felt so sore and stiff at first that he could hardly move, and almost feared that he must give the matter up, but he grew better as he went on. He had quite matured

his plan of operations. He knew that Mr. Burroughs, who lived a little way above Chapman's, on the edge of the pond, had an old scow which always lay on the shore in front of his house. His plan was to borrow this and row himself down to the island—a task which would be made easier by the current. He would make a thorough search for the little ship, and if he found it, he would himself carry it to Mr. Chapman's.

Henry trembled as he passed Mr. Chapman's house, but all was quiet about it, and a light was still burning in the upper room. Henry's sigh was almost a sob, but he bravely choked down the tears and hurried on. He had no strength to spend in crying. He found the little flat-bottomed boat, with the

paddles in her, lying just at the edge of the water. It was rather hard work to get her afloat alone, but he succeeded at last, and paddled towards the island, which he reached in safety, though he could not help seeing that the boat let in more water than was altogether comfortable. "I must bale her out before I go back," he said to himself. "She is a miserable old scow, anyhow, but I hope she'll get me home safely."

The island was a very small one, only a few rods in extent, but it was mostly green, and had two or three trees and some bushes growing on it. The upper end was covered with logs and driftwood. Henry walked towards it, and saw something white lying up near the beach, close by a great log which

lay partly in and partly out of the water. There, sure enough, and safe enough, was the missing ship. The long string had become entangled among the logs, and the little Sylvia lay as safely as possible. Tremblingly, Henry drew her to land and took her out of the water. Yes, she seemed to be all right. "Oh how glad I am!" he exclaimed aloud. "Now, I do wonder if the poor kitty is here? She can't be though, I suppose. She would get washed off. Kitty, kitty, kitty!"

"Mew, mew!" answered a doleful little voice from the branches of a tree. Henry looked up, and burst into tears of joy. There was kitty, all alive, and apparently little the worse for her involuntary voyage.

"You dear kitty! Come down

here this minute!" cried Henry as soon as he could speak. "Kitty, kitty, come down."

Kitty chose to make a tremendous fuss about getting down, and to pretend she had never done such a thing before in her life, but in her little kitten heart she was as glad to see Henry as he was to see her, and once in his arms she forgot all her affectation, and purred like a spinning-wheel as she bumped her nose against every part of Henry's face in turn. Henry had often laughed at Nelly for kissing the cat, but in his joy he kissed the little sailor pussy as heartily as Nelly would have done.

"You dear little thing, you don't bear malice a bit, do you?" said he. "Well, now, the next thing is to get home again, and I tell you what,

pussy, that isn't going to be so easy."

Pussy seemed to be of the same opinion. She was very much afraid of the water, and as Henry went towards it she struggled hard to get away.

"This won't do," said Henry. "I wonder how I shall manage? I know! I will just button you up inside my jacket, miss, and if you don't like it, why you must do the other thing, that's all. Don't you go and do like that Spartan fellow's fox that he stole, in Plutarch's Lives, you know, pussy."

Pussy scratched as if she considered the Spartan fellow's fox a model worthy of the closest imitation, but once tightly buttoned up, she seemed to resign herself to her fate, and apparently finding the

warmth agreeable, she presently began to purr.

"Come, that's acting like a sensible cat!" said Henry. "Now for home and breakfast."

As he had predicted, Henry found the going home rather hard work. The current was against him, and lame as he was from his beating, he found rowing against it very hard work, especially as he dared not take off his jacket. The old boat was heavy and unmanageable, and worse than all, when she was about halfway across she began taking in water at an alarming rate. Henry rowed desperately, but the faster he went, the worse the boat leaked.

"I shall be drowned, after all," he thought, despairingly. "Oh, father, what will you say? Any-

how, when they find me they will know what I came after, and that it is not a fool's trick this time. But I won't give up. O Lord, do help me to get to shore!"

It seemed to Henry that he received new strength, and he worked with renewed vigour; but just as he reached the shallow water he felt the boat settling under him. Even then he thought of Willy's ship, and hastily wound the string round his button, the thought crossing his mind that if he was drowned the ship would show where the body was.

But Henry was not destined to drown this time. The sun was up now, and Mr. Chapman had just come out of his house, to refresh himself with the air (after his long night's watching by the bedside of

poor Lucy), as the boat finally sunk, almost carrying Henry down with it. The boy rose again and struck out boldly for the shore, but the water was very cold and his strength was exhausted. He would infallibly have added another to the victims of Short's Folly but for Mr. Chapman, who plunged into the water and dragged him out by main force.

"It's you, is it, you young villain!" said Chapman when he had got him safely on dry land. "What have you been up to now? Didn't I tell you I'd put you into the pond if you came round my place again?"

"Well, you did the next thing to it—you pulled me out," gasped Henry, half drowned and with chattering teeth, but unable to restrain his triumph. "I went over to the

island after Willy's ship, and I have got it, and the kitten, too, if she isn't drowned."

"She ain't, that's clear," said Chapman, as pussy, squalling pit-eously, at last succeeded in pushing her head out. "So you went over there to look for the ship! What did you do that for?"

"Because I was sorry I acted so!"

"Humph! Did your father know it?"

"No, sir. I heard him say last night he meant to go, though, and that was the reason I went so early. I borrowed Burroughs's old scow and rowed over. I thought if any one was to be drowned it had better be me than father, and I did so want to get the ship again, and the kitten too; though I didn't expect to find her alive. Please, Mr. Chap-

man, won't you forgive me, and let Willy go to Sunday-school?"

"We'll see about that," said Chapman. "But you mustn't stay here talking in your wet clothes. You are shaking like an ague fit, already."

"Yes," said Henry, speaking with difficulty. "I guess I am getting a chill."

"You do look something like it," returned Chapman. "You must just get into bed with Will, and I'll go home and get you some dry clothes. Or if you feel as if you could ride, here comes Bennet with his team, and he'll take you there in no time."

"I'd rather go home, please," answered Henry. Chapman hailed the mule team which was coming down for lumber, and helped Henry

into the wagon. He ran into the house for a thick shawl, which he wrapped around the shivering boy, and sat down by him, supporting him in his arms.

“Another time don’t go risking your life for a dumb beast and a plaything,” said he. “What do you think your father will say?”

“I don’t think he will be angry,” replied Henry. “He would have gone himself, I know. Oh my head!”

“Keep up! we are just at home, and here’s your father at the gate,” returned Chapman, not unkindly. “You’ll be all right, now. I say, parson, you’d better bottle up this boy of yours, and wire the cork in, too. You won’t keep him out of mischief any other way. If he hadn’t been born to be hanged,

he'd have been drowned this morning, sure."

"Henry!" exclaimed Mr. Willson, in amazement. "I thought you were safe in bed. Where have you been?"

"There! don't you blow him up; he don't need it this time," said Chapman. "Let the women folks put him to bed, and I'll tell you the story. It seems he heard Jeduthen Cooke say last night that everything sent adrift in the pond lodged on the island; so what does he do but take Burroughs's old scow and go over there to look for the ship? He found it, and the cat too, though it beats all how she ever got there alive, but the young one had a narrow escape, which he's not likely to forget. The old boat sunk with him about twelve or fif-

teen rods from shore, and if I hadn't seen him, he'd have gone, sure."

"Then you saved his life?" said Mr. Willson, grasping Chapman's hand. "My friend, how shall I ever thank you?"

"Oh, nonsense! Don't begin on that. You'd have done as much for me any day. I expected you'd be very mad at me for thrashing him so last night."

"Not at all. I was very much obliged to you for saving me the trouble. Henry richly deserved all he got, though I think he is truly sorry for his fault. To think that while I thought him safe in bed he was risking his life in such a mad way!"

"From all I can find out, he had a notion that any one going on the pond was pretty likely to be

drowned, anyhow," observed Chapman. "The young ones have got that notion, and it ain't a bad one for them. Henry had the idea that you meant to go after the ship, and he thought if anybody was to go under, it had better be him than you. I tell you what, he'll make a man yet."

"I hope he will, and a Christian man too," said Mr. Willson. "How is your little daughter?"

"Well, she's pretty bad—pretty bad," replied Chapman, his face clouding. "She had fainting spells all night long, and we thought she was gone two or three times. I don't know whether she'll stand it or not, poor little thing!"

"You must have felt pretty hardly towards my poor boy?"

"I felt just as though I'd like to

kill him," said Chapman. "I almost swore I would if Lucy died. But you needn't be afraid," he added, more gently. "The boy's done all he could to make amends, and after that I don't bear him no malice."

CHAPTER VII.

HENRY was quite right in supposing that he was going to have a chill. He had suffered from ague in Kansas, as almost every one does in a new country, and ague, as all know who have had it, is very apt to come back. Poor Henry shook for two hours, and burned with fever for the rest of the day, and for six or seven days in succession the fit came back every morning with increasing violence, shaking all the strength and ambition out of the poor boy, and making him look like the yellow shadow of himself. At the end of

that time the attack was broken up, but it was several days before he could creep down stairs. His head had suffered greatly, and he had been unable to bear any talking, so that he had seen no one but the members of his own family. The second day that he came down stairs he was left alone for a short time. He managed to get to the open door as the children came by from school, and Ezra Parsons, seeing him at the door, came in to speak to him :

“Are you better, Henry?” he asked. “You look as if you had been having a pretty hard time.”

“Indeed I have,” replied Henry. “I never was much sicker in my life. But what’s the news, Ezra? Oh, did Willy Chapman come to Sunday-school last Sunday?”

“Why, no,” replied Ezra, in a tone of surprise. “That was the day Lucy was buried! Didn’t you know? Hallo! What’s the matter?” for Henry had sunk down on a chair paler than ever.

“Lucy dead!” he exclaimed, faintly. “Lucy Chapman?”

“Why, yes! There! I’m sorry I told you. I supposed you knew all about it, of course, as your father attended the funeral. She died on Friday, and was buried Sunday afternoon down here in the burying-ground.”

“Did she know she was going to die?”

“Oh yes! She had her senses, and she talked to them all beautifully, they say. She made her father promise to try to leave off swearing, and to go to church some-

times, and died just as placidly as if she was going to sleep."

"I wish you'd help me on the lounge, Ezra," said Henry, faintly, "and please call somebody. I feel so queer."

Miss Hester was close by, and came at the first call, to see Henry sink back in a fainting fit. For several days he was worse than ever, often delirious, and accusing himself of the murder of Lucy and Emily. It was two weeks before he was well enough to have any conversation with his father about the matter. One evening Mr. Willson came in and sat by his son's bedside.

"Do you feel better to-night?" said he.

"I don't know. Yes, I suppose so," replied Henry, wearily. "I

don't know whether I ever want to be better," he added, presently. "I don't feel as though I ever could face anybody again. Every one will know that I was the cause of Lucy's death. Every one will despise me and hate me, and with good reason. I know it is wrong, father, but sometimes I can't help wishing that Mr. Chapman had just let me go that day."

"Your feeling is natural enough, my dear son," said his father, kindly, "but, nevertheless, it is one to be striven against. Every one knows, as you say, that you did wrong, but every one knows also that you did your best, and even risked your life, to repair your error. Chapman blames himself more than you for Lucy's death. He says it was his violence which

frightened her. Dr. Henry, however, says that it might have been neither—that she might have died, at any rate. They made an examination after her death, and they say it is wonderful that the poor child lived as long as she did.”

“Did Lucy say anything about me, father?” asked Henry, after a pause.

“Yes; she sent her love to you. She was not able to talk a great deal, but she said that, and she had a conversation in private with her father. He did not tell me all that passed, only that he had promised to come to church sometimes, and to try to leave off his profane talk.”

“Do you think he will, father?”

“I think so. I wonder very much that he should make such a prom-

ise, but once having made it, I believe he will keep his word."

"He was so fond of Lucy," said Henry, sighing. "Father, tell me honestly: do you think there is any use in my trying any more to be good and to—to be a Christian?" Henry brought out the last words with an effort.

"What will you do if you *don't* try, my dear child?" asked Mr. Willson.

Henry was silent a while, and then said, "I don't know that I thought of that. I thought I had been so wicked there was no use in trying any more—that nobody would believe me. But of course the Lord would see my heart, and *he* would know. I am sure he does know that I want to be good, and to serve him."

“He surely does, Henry, if that is the case.”

“It *is* so, father, indeed,” said Henry, eagerly. “I don’t feel as though I should ever be happy again in the world, but if I thought that he would let me work for him, and do some good to make up for the mischief I have done, I wouldn’t so much care whether I was happy or not.”

“You may be sure, my dear Henry, that God will accept your service if you offer it to him,” said his father. “He never yet refused any one who came and gave himself to him in a truly humble spirit and with an earnest desire to please him. As you say, that is the great thing for which to live.”

Henry did not get out of doors

again till the trees were painted with their autumn colours. One day Mr. Willson came home from Hobartstown with a quantity of beautiful plants and trees. He told Henry and Nelly that they might each have two for their own, and might take their choice.

"May we do what we like with them?" asked Henry.

"Certainly," replied his father.

Henry chose an English ivy and a weeping birch, and that evening he stole out just at sunset and planted them by little Lucy's grave in the churchyard. He had just finished his work when a hand was laid on his shoulder, and looking up, he saw Chapman standing over him. The man was so variable in his moods that Henry did not know what to look for at his hands. He

stood still, and waited for Chapman to speak first.

“What now?” asked Chapman.

“My father gave me this tree and vine, and I thought I would like to give them to Lucy,” answered Henry. “Perhaps I ought to have asked you before I planted them.”

“All right,” returned Chapman, and then added, in a musing tone, as he looked down at the little grave: “Lucy always loved flowers and birds, and all kinds of pretty things.”

“She has gone where she will have a plenty of them,” Henry ventured to say.

“Well, I hope so,” returned Mr. Chapman. “I’d like to think there was such a heaven as your father talks about, even if I should never see it. It is pleasant to think of

her and my old mother—" He broke off abruptly and turned away, but presently came back.

"Henry," said he, "I want you to know that I don't bear no malice against you. There was one time when I did feel as if I could kill you. I almost swore I would if Lucy didn't get well. But then when you went off that way on the pond, and risked your life to make amends, I got over that feeling. I see that I was almost as much to blame as you for—for what happened. She must have died very soon, anyway, the doctors say. I promised Lucy to do some things, and one of 'em was to make friends with you. I don't know as we could find any better place than this to do it, so if you will forgive me, I'll forgive you."

“I haven’t anything to forgive, Mr. Chapman,” said Henry. “You served me just right for plaguing Lucy and Will, and besides, you saved my life afterwards, but I should like to shake hands with you, and be sure that you have forgiven me.”

“Good!” said Chapman, and they joined hands over the little grave.

THE END.





